

December 4, 2025

HARVARD INDEPENDENT

Vol. LVII, Issue 14

The student weekly since 1969

*Season's
Greetings*



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Journey to Oxford: Harvard's 2026 Rhodes Scholars

Perspectives on growth, gratitude, and the road ahead.

BY SOPHIA GONZALEZ '28



In Nov. 15, eight Harvard undergraduates were awarded the 2026 Rhodes Scholarship and will head to Oxford in Fall 2027. Five recipients are from international constituencies—Sazi Bongwe '26, Je Qin “Jay” Choi '26, Will Flintloft '26, Hairong “Helen” He '26, and Fajr Khan '26—and three from the American constituency—Anil Cacodcar '26, Yael Goldstein '26, and Emma Finn '26. They are among 106 recipients worldwide. Chosen for their academic achievements, leadership, and character, Rhodes Scholars represent some of the best and brightest students across the globe. Harvard has produced more American Rhodes Scholars than any other college globally, totaling 402 to date.

The Rhodes Scholarship, established in 1902, is the world's oldest and one of the most prestigious international scholarship programs. It originally selected 57 scholars annually across nine constituencies: the United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe and Zambia), New Zealand, Bermuda and Jamaica, and Germany. After World War II, its geographic diversity expanded; it now includes 25 constituencies and a Global selection, cumulatively electing 106 scholars each year.

The United States Rhodes Scholarship awards 32 American students full funding for postgraduate study at Oxford University, selecting candidates on four criteria: literary and scholastic achievements; energy to use one's talents to the full; truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness, unselfishness, and fellowship; and moral force of character and instincts to lead, and to take an interest in one's fellow beings.

Of nearly 2,800 U.S. applicants, 965 first received institutional endorsements by submitting materials: Grade Point Average (3.7-4.0), five to eight references, and several essays to their college fellowship office. The official Rhodes application is due in early October, and candidates are placed into 16 geographic districts by residency. Each district hosts receptions and in-person interviews in mid-November, then selects two scholars, announced immediately after deliberations.

Anil Cacodcar '26



A senior in Cabot House from Louisiana, Cacodcar double-concentrates in Economics and Human Developmental and Regenerative Biology. At Oxford, he hopes to pursue a Master of Philosophy in Economics, focusing on the intersection of public opinion research and public health for disease prevention.

“Junior fall, I started to think about what it would mean to study at Oxford for two years a bit more seriously,” Cacodcar said in an interview with the *Harvard Independent*. “It was the first time since senior year of high school—when you write the Common App

essay—I got to seriously reflect on how my experiences fit together and to really connect those dots.”

“To reflect on the village it has taken to get me here has been the most meaningful part of this process,” Cacodcar added. “Not just during the application process, but also after, thinking about everyone from my first-grade teacher to my senior thesis advisor who has made such a tremendous impact on my life and been so invested in my growth.”

American candidates learn whether they are among the 32 Scholars after a few hours of deliberations following final interviews.

“I literally think I said ‘wow’ out loud after my name was called. This is just one of those things that leaves you speechless; I remember the first person I called was my little brother... It was just really special,” Cacodcar said.

With a keen interest in global health, Cacodcar expressed his excitement in studying the operational challenges of the United Kingdom's National Health Service, which provides high-quality healthcare free at the point of use: “I am looking forward to not just the Rhodes community, but the Oxford community... learning about the people in the United Kingdom: their beliefs and their attitudes towards the economy, towards politics, towards healthcare,” he said.

Emma Finn '26



Finn, a senior in Currier House studying Mathematics and Classics, plans to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy in Statistics at Oxford. The Rhodes Scholarship will fund up to three years of her doctoral study. Currently, her research focuses on how machine learning models may better align with human values. Finn plans to continue her investigation of building and interpreting AI systems to ultimately inform future regulation.

“The technical research agenda I was pursuing seemed really interesting intellectually and really amazing and fulfilling,” Finn said. Finn knew she would be applying to Ph.D. programs but was unsure whether the Rhodes application would be worth it. She decided around spring break of her junior year to apply.

“Like a lot of people, I was kind of on the fence because it seemed so unrealistic...But I had some good conversations with my [Principal Investigator] and then a couple of faculty mentors at Harvard about what I wanted to do,” Finn said. “I had the opportunity and the obligation to contribute to the greater good in some way.”

During evaluation, prospective scholars have about two weeks to prepare for their first-round interviews in an already busy senior fall. “All of my mock interviews were by far my favorite part. It was a really good excuse to have people interrogate me about what my values were, what I wanted to do in the world, what mattered to me,” Finn reflected.

“At Oxford, there are so many faculty members

whom I'm just so excited to meet, whose research I've been reading.” Finn continued, “To meet them, ask questions about their work, potentially collaborate with them, is just so exciting to me.”

Hairong “Helen” He '26



A senior in Currier House, He studies Computer Science and East Asian Studies. At Oxford, she plans to obtain a Master's in Computer Science and another in traditional Chinese Studies to pursue research on how technology can preserve cultural heritage.

He is a recipient of the Rhodes Scholarship for China, which made her application process slightly different. Two of her interviews were held virtually, and she attended a final in-person interview in Hong Kong.

International students may apply to constituencies based on citizenship and permanent residency, regardless of where they attend college.

“I felt very privileged that there was this opportunity where someone could read through all your materials and talk with you so in-depth about what I care about in the virtual interviews,” He said. “The final interview was pretty intense, but also a wonderful opportunity to meet other candidates from China coming from different universities across the world.”

Cacodcar, Finn, and He are looking forward to continuing their studies and joining the community of Rhodes Scholars, adding their names to the ranks of Harvard alumni.

All three said they look forward to joining the Rhodes community, exchanging research, and gaining a deeper understanding of the scholars they met during interviews and how those peers hope to shape the future.

“Listening and hearing, learning from every individual person in the community, is what I'm most excited about, because it's such a diverse and vibrant, dynamic community,” He said. “I'm really excited to collaborate with them...to turn research into something that has societal impact.”

SOPHIA GONZALEZ '28 (SOPHIAGONZALEZ@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HOPES THAT THESE SCHOLARS' STORIES INSPIRE PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF EMMA FINN '26, DANIEL RODRIGUEZ, AND NILES SINGER/HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Mail-in Ballots: National Change and Political Controversies

States across America have altered their mail-in voting processes, spurring confusion and partisan tensions.

BY SEYI AMOSUN '29

In the years following the turbulent 2020 election, characterized by election fraud allegations and the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol, absentee voting policies shifted across American states. This year, Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Utah all passed measures in their state legislatures to reduce existing grace periods for voting by mail, or to eliminate them altogether, with the most recent change happening on May 23. Restricted voting access poses an issue to voters in special circumstances, especially college students—85% of Harvard undergraduates live out of state.

Mail-in voting has become tied up in partisan politics, complicating voters' access to absentee ballots. "Since COVID, the use of mail-in ballots has become polarized along party [lines]," Charles H. Stewart, MIT's Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Director of the MIT Election Data and Science Lab, explained in a statement to the *Independent*. "Although some of that polarization has abated, it's still the case that Democrats are more likely to favor voting by mail than Republicans. That wasn't true before COVID."

These states join 22 others that have since tightened laws regarding absentee voting, voter identification, and ballot collection. Most changes occurred in GOP strongholds (Wyoming, Alabama), though some swing states (Arizona, North Carolina) and solidly Democratic states (New York, New Hampshire) also adopted more restrictive policies.

"I think mail-in ballots have been a crucial expansion of access to voting for myriad communities across the country, from those that live far from traditional polling places...to those out of town around election time (including students, military members, and others)," Ruth Greenwood, Assistant Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Election Law Clinic at Harvard Law School, wrote to the *Harvard Independent*.

"Mail-in ballots [are] probably one of the most difficult parts for voting for students at Harvard, just because a lot of students are not native to Cambridge," Dominick Lombard '27, co-chair of the Harvard Votes Challenge, said in an interview with the *Independent*. "Different states have a lot of different policies regarding mail-in ballots. Some require that the mail-in ballot just be postmarked by election day. Some require that they be received on election day."

Though some state provisions to limit absentee voting have been blocked in state and federal courts, the general movement to reduce access to voting is part of a wider shift in the American conservative political movement.

Perhaps the most public backlash against this system came from President Donald Trump. In a post on Truth Social, he detailed his plans to end absentee ballot voting.

"I am going to lead a movement to get rid of MAIL-IN BALLOTS, and also, while we're at it, Highly 'Inaccurate,' Very Expensive, and Seriously Controversial VOTING MACHINES, which cost Ten Times more than accurate and sophisticated Watermark Paper, which is faster, and leaves NO DOUBT, at the end of the evening, as to who WON, and who LOST, the Election."

His initiative to eliminate vote-by-mail comes after claims of absentee ballot fraud in the 2020 election, during which many states temporarily

relaxed mail-in ballot rules due to COVID-19. That year, Trump alleged the "Big Lie," believing the election was stolen through forged signatures, foreign interference, illegal ballot printing, and tampered mailboxes.

"The battles against mail-in ballots are mainly driven by Trump. He uses this approach but got it in his head, mistakenly, that it hurts him and [the] GOP overall," Theda Skocpol, Victor S. Thomas Professor of Government and Sociology at Harvard University, wrote to the *Independent*. "[This is] not really true because a lot of older people who lean right use this approach. The push against this approach is just one of MANY kinds of right-wing efforts to restrict voting and undermine trust in results."

The President signed an executive order on March 25 prohibiting states from having grace periods with absentee ballot systems, as is the practice in 16 states, plus Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Washington, D.C. However, the order has since been struck down in the U.S. District Court for Massachusetts and faces widespread legal criticism for its unconstitutionality.

"What is clear is that a presidential executive order cannot make sweeping changes to elections. That is consistent with the Constitution, and that interpretation was found recently by a federal court in response to suits seeking to enjoin President Trump's Executive Order on Elections," Greenwood continued.

Other experts point out the inaccuracies of the President's statements on fraudulent voting via mail. "Mail-in ballots have been used in various states to expand access, especially for older people but also for everyone. They can be administered safely and there is nothing wrong with them at all. We have no evidence of systematic voter fraud on more than trivial scales using any voting method," Skocpol explained.

Because of GOP allegations of voter fraud and partisan bias in absentee voting, the Republican National Committee filed a lawsuit in June with the Supreme Court. *Watson v. Republican National Committee* argued that Mississippi's five-day ballot grace period was in violation of federal law. Lawyers for the Republicans suggested that Congress had the sole authority to decide when elections

ended, and that it should establish a uniform election day.

This assertion raises other constitutional questions. "Article I, Section 4 (the Elections Clause) gives states sole authority over the 'time, place, and manner' of federal elections unless Congress intervenes, which it has done sparingly. The federal government has only the authority that Congress has indicated," Stewart wrote.

These challenges from the RNC are not new; they launched several lawsuits to eliminate grace period laws before the 2024 elections in multiple states.

Now, in the midst of contentious political turnover and questions of election validity, USPS announced that it would consider redefining what a postmark date actually is: "The postmark date does not inherently or necessarily align with the date on which the Postal Service first accepted possession of a mailpiece." These changes could cause issues for verifying mail-in ballots in states with newly reduced grace periods.

With a growing legal and operational threat to the future of mail-in ballots, Lombard reaffirmed their importance for voters on campus.

"Being a college student, they're extremely important to have, because there would be a lot of students who would be disenfranchised without mail-in ballots, just because either how expensive a flight is, just to go back for two days to vote... Mail-in ballots really allow for that flexibility."

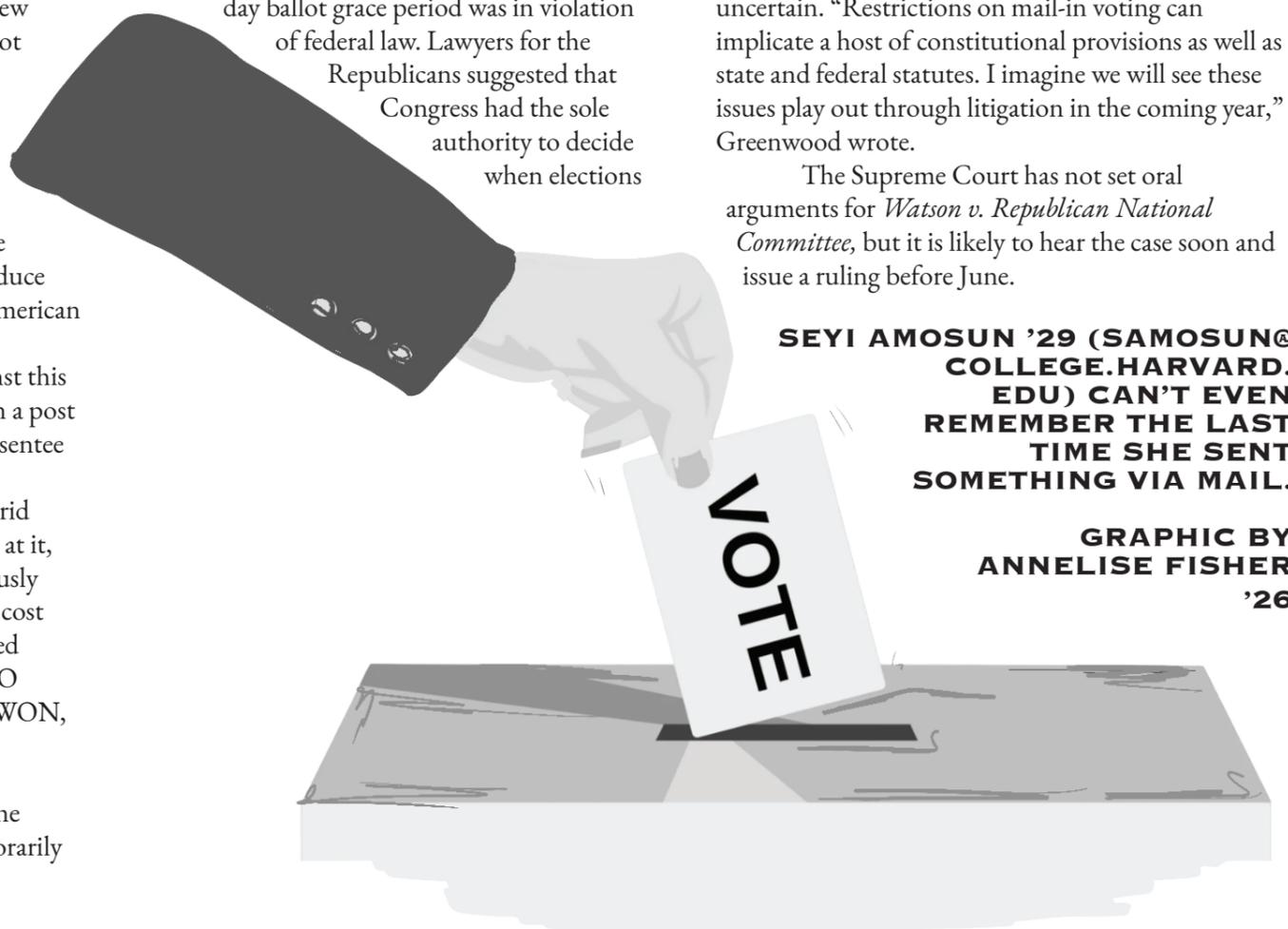
For students seeking information about voting, specifically requesting an absentee ballot, HVC does the work to ensure the voting process is as smooth as possible. "We send emails to students based on their state. And there we give them different deadlines and registration links, including the voter registration, but also deadlines to request mail-in ballots, the deadline to have them postmarked or sent back in based on their state's law," he explained. "We really try to do our best to inform students about the different deadlines coming up, ways in which they can request mail-in ballots and submit them in time."

The future of mail-in ballots remains uncertain. "Restrictions on mail-in voting can implicate a host of constitutional provisions as well as state and federal statutes. I imagine we will see these issues play out through litigation in the coming year," Greenwood wrote.

The Supreme Court has not set oral arguments for *Watson v. Republican National Committee*, but it is likely to hear the case soon and issue a ruling before June.

SEYI AMOSUN '29 (SAMOSUN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER THE LAST TIME SHE SENT SOMETHING VIA MAIL.

GRAPHIC BY ANNE LISE FISHER '26



Trump 2.0 and the Future of the GOP

Kevin McCarthy on grievance politics, party realignment, and what comes after Trump.

BY NASHLA TURCIOS '28

On Nov. 17, Harvard Kennedy School's John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum hosted a conversation between Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), the 55th Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, and Graham Allison '68, the Douglas Dillon Professor of Government and former Dean of the Harvard Kennedy School.

Together, they examined how Donald Trump's political tenure has reshaped the Republican Party—its internal power struggles, electoral strategy, and governing agenda—while debating what a post-Trump future might mean for both the GOP and American democracy.

Trump 2.0 and a Political Comeback

McCarthy opened the discussion by distinguishing Trump's two presidencies. "Timing is everything when you serve. Trump 2 is different from Trump 1," he said.

According to McCarthy, Trump's first term was the story of an outsider improvising his way through Washington without an established political network. "When he got in, he didn't have a lot of people that were with him. He had to fill spaces, not having been a governor or a congressman or a senator before," he said.

This assessment aligns with similar studies from Trump's 2016 presidency. For instance, analysts at the Brookings Institution noted that Trump's first-term White House experienced unusually high staff turnover, as Trump cycled through chiefs of staff, cabinet officials, and advisers in search of loyalists at a higher frequency than any other recent administration.

"He felt as though he had people in his own administration work against him and not know his philosophy," McCarthy continued.

At the same time, Trump's core issues—immigration and border enforcement, aggressive use of tariffs, and attempts to pressure drug companies over prescription prices—became such defining features of his brand that he was slowly able to attract a new political staff entirely aligned with this new understanding of conservatism.

McCarthy stressed that Trump's political identity did not just center around his in-office priorities, but also grievance and resistance against both institutions in Washington and investigations that marked his first term. "He feels he kind of got cheated in the first term. Russiagate wasn't true about him. It bogged him down. They fought him instead of working for him. He never got a honeymoon...COVID came and restricted what he was able to do. When he was out, he got persecuted," McCarthy recounted.

In McCarthy's view, Trump's 2024 return to the White House only intensified that sense of grievance-fueled strength. He described a second term defined less by party infrastructure and more by personal mandate. "When he came back and won the second time, he had to fight through his own primary, and he became stronger as he went. And when we won the second term, he won the popular vote, which is a very big deal for a Republican."

Trump's 2024 victory did indeed make history: Republicans had not won the American popular vote in a presidential race since the reelection of George W. Bush in 2004. In 2024, Trump won roughly 49.8% of the vote to Kamala Harris's 48%, a narrow margin, but enough to secure both the Electoral College and the popular vote for the first time in his three presidential bids.

To McCarthy, this ability to upset political trends is a characteristic of "Trump 2.0's" unique coalition—one that can also break the usual alignment between presidential results and down-ballot performance. Recent presidential elections have typically seen Senate races move in lockstep with the top of the ticket, and 2020 was notable for unusually stable partisan patterns across states. McCarthy used his own reading of those trends to argue that Trump operates as a political force distinct from the Republican Party itself.

"In the last election—this is my personal belief—the Democrats lost, the Republicans lost, and Trump won. If you analyze the last 70 races for the Senate in a presidential year, however they vote for the president, they vote for that party," he noted.

"If that was the case, the Republicans should've won four more states. Trump carried it, but they didn't...they underperformed, so that tells you that once Trump is on the ticket, he brings a coalition of people that won't [necessarily] follow the party."

And though Trump is now serving his last possible term as president, McCarthy argued that this position only sharpens Trump's leverage over Republicans who hope to succeed him.

"He knows he only has one term left, but that is also unique in that it makes him different from somebody else. He will troll the press and say, Oh, a third term. Why does he do that? Because he doesn't want to become a lame duck... He is so politically strong, no one is going to run until he says it's okay," McCarthy said.

The Democrats' Electability Problem

Turning from Republican politics, McCarthy sketched a sharply critical view of the Democratic Party's internal dynamics. He focused on the age of its leaders and the growing tension between its moderate and left-wing factions.

"What's going to happen now is people who are from a more socialist wing of the party will challenge the 80-year-olds. The moderates will be respectful to the incumbents, and what's going to happen is the [80-year-olds] are going to get beat. Then, the party is going to swing further left," he said.

His comments echoed a broader debate within the party about what some critics now call a Democratic "gerontocracy." In recent years, top figures such as Joe Biden, Nancy Pelosi, Steny Hoyer, and Jim Clyburn—all in their eighties or late seventies—have faced pressure to make room for a younger generation of lawmakers. At the same time, progressive challengers backed by groups like the Democratic Socialists of America have successfully unseated long-serving incumbents in safe blue districts.

Looking ahead to the next presidential cycle,

McCarthy framed that choice in stark terms. "If they nominate a Mamdani, I think they will lose. If they nominate a governor that's kind of in the middle and is going to govern, it's going to be a very competitive race," he said.

Zohran Mamdani, a New York politician and longtime member of the Democratic Socialists of America who rose from the state assembly to the



New York City mayoralty, has become a symbol of the party's ascendant democratic socialist wing, campaigning on housing reform, expanded social services, and criminal justice changes.

McCarthy also offered one last bit of unsolicited advice for Democrats, this time aimed directly at the party's 2024 experience. "If they had let the primary play out, Kamala would never have been the nominee, and they would've had a stronger chance," he said.

But when the conversation turned back to Republicans, he sounded less certain about what comes after Trump. "This is my personal take," McCarthy said. "I don't think MAGA transfers. I don't think Trump can say he is the next person. Trump is built on Trump. The reason why Trump is different from other elected officials is because we learned decades before about him."

Long before he entered politics, Trump was a nationally recognizable brand in his own right: a New York real estate developer who turned his name into a marketing asset for luxury towers, casinos, golf courses, and assorted businesses. Beginning in the 1980s, he cultivated a tabloid persona as a billionaire dealmaker, and later reached an even wider audience as the host of "The Apprentice," where his "you're fired" catchphrase became a staple of reality TV. By the time he launched his first presidential campaign, voters had already spent years encountering Trump as a character in American popular culture, not just as a political newcomer.

"We elected him because we wanted a disruptor. No one can survive things that Trump has done politically. Since we already knew about him, when you attack him, you're attacking us. So I don't think it transfers from that standpoint," McCarthy concluded.

NASHLA TURCIOS '28 (NASHLATURCIOS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES NEWS FOR THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIKE DESTEFANO



Latkes, Dreidels, and Mystery Maccabee: Harvard Hillel's Hanukkah Celebrations

What does Hanukkah look like at Harvard Hillel?

BY SIDNEY REGELBRUGGE '28

For many Jewish students on campus, this time of the year—as classes begin winding down and students get ready for break—also means preparing for the much-anticipated holiday of Hanukkah. Hanukkah, the eight-day Jewish Holiday also known as the “Festival of Lights,” will take place this year from nightfall on Sunday, Dec. 14, to Monday, Dec. 22.

Within Harvard's Jewish community, many undergraduates will miss some—or even all—of their family traditions throughout the week, as final exams at the College do not officially end until Dec. 19.

In the Jewish faith, Hanukkah serves as a week to remember and recognize the successful revolt by a small group of Jews, known as the Maccabees, against their Greek rulers to reclaim their land as well as their holy temple. The holiday's ceremonial lighting of candles commemorates the “Hanukkah miracle”—the moment after the temple was reclaimed from Antiochus IV, and they found only one day's supply of sacred oil to relight the temple's eternal lamp. Yet, the oil miraculously lasted for eight days, giving the Maccabees just enough time to prepare new and pure oil and complete the rededication of the temple.

Hanukkah also includes the lighting of the celebratory candles on the menorah from the Shamash, which in Hebrew means “helper.” Accompanying the lighting of candles, a blessing in Hebrew will often be recited, and festive songs will be sung. Following the practices regarding the menorah, gifts are given to children, often, on each of the eight nights.

For Jewish-identifying students on campus, Hanukkah manifests in many different forms.

“It's sort of taken on different meanings between secular Jews in the United States and Jews in Israel, or Jews thousands of years ago,” Harvard Hillel Holiday Chair Henry Levenson '28 reflected. “Obviously, [Hanukkah] has its own complicated history, but certainly for American Jews, it fills a unique role in creating this sort of winter holiday. There's a lot of time with family and gift giving, which is sort of reminiscent of what I remember as a kid.”

According to Levenson, there are two components of Hanukkah, one being the historical aim and then the American cultural component—both of which Hillel focuses on when planning the holiday festivities to help University affiliates feel more at home.

“For this year, specifically, my goal as Holiday Chair—and working with the student board and the adult leadership we have at Hillel—has just been to create some fun events where people can find community and that sort of winter spirit,” Levenson said. “And also for the end of

the semester, have [Hillel] as sort of the dual purpose of Hanukkah celebration and end of semester celebration.”

As an extension of Harvard Hillel, Levenson will also be hosting a “Mystery Maccabee,” akin to Secret Santa. Interested students can sign up, will be given the name of another student, and will be asked to buy them a gift of a predetermined value. Levenson will be sending out information on how to join the event shortly.

“Hopefully people will feel [that these events are] reminiscent of people's Hanukkah celebrations at home, and it'll be a good way for people to spend some time together at the end of the semester,” Levenson said.

Hillel will also be sponsoring additional Hanukkah celebrations, teeming with food and activities. “We're just going to have traditional Hanukkah foods, such as latkes—which are fried potato pancakes—and Sufganiyah—which are basically jelly donuts,” Levenson noted. He also explained that there will be games, including Driedel and Gelt.

These activities are open to all students on campus, regardless of whether they are Jewish-identifying. “Everything I do is always open to everybody, especially this Hanukkah, [and] especially the cultural stuff. We're always happy to have new people in the door, and bring your friends, bring your enemies, because it's really about community, and it's about bringing people together,” Levenson said.

For Levenson, he finds himself navigating how the holidays have changed while being at Harvard—and as Holiday Chair, these celebrations teach him how to foster that same sense of community for his peers.

“My particular experience with Hanukkah is definitely personal,” noted Levenson, joking about his excitement for Hillel latkes this holiday season. “I think it's a combination of nostalgia for prior holidays and prior experiences at home and the creation of new traditions and new communities,”

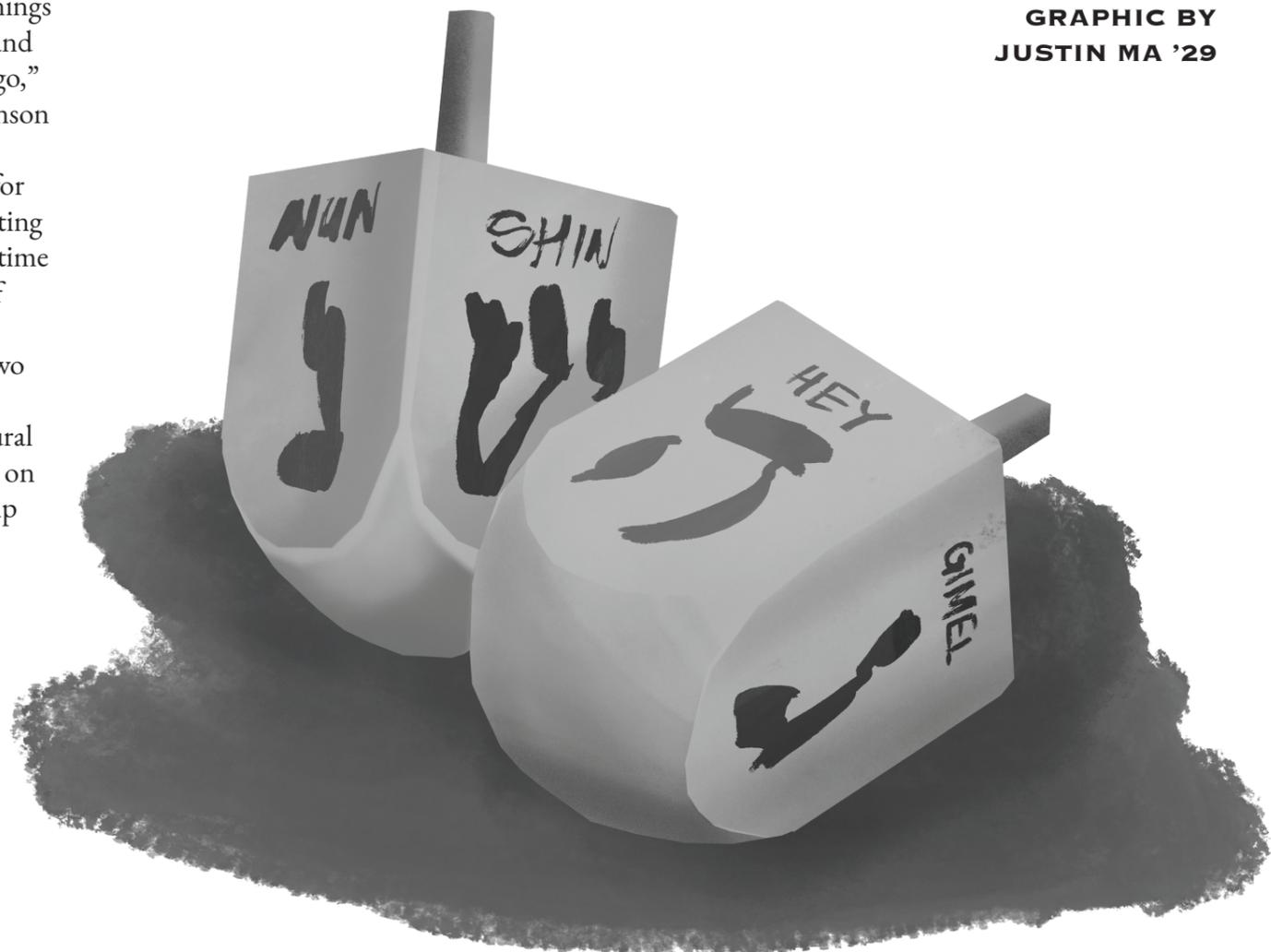
Levenson said. “It's about using those symbols of the holiday that are familiar to people, so whether it's latkes or dreidels or gift giving, but it's also about being with new friends that we've made at Harvard, and the new communities and really just creating that sense of a home away from home.”

Hanukkah has been about spending time with family and friends, and this is something that Levenson hopes to bring to Hillel as a Holiday Chair. “It has always been a time to connect with family, to bring some light into the very short days now, especially with the light saving time, yes, and to connect with Judaism. And now I've been to college, and I'm hoping to do the same.”

More information, including formal dates for Mystery Macabee and the Hanukkah celebration, will be shared soon. Levenson invites all Harvard undergraduates to ask their friends to join in on the festivities, Jewish identifying or not: “We take you where you're at, and we're not a prophetizing religion—we're here to have fun and to celebrate community. Hillel will remain open till the exam period closes.”

SIDNEY REGELBRUGGE '28 (SIDNEYREGELBRUGGE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS EXCITED TO EAT LATKES AND GELT WITH HER FRIENDS.

GRAPHIC BY JUSTIN MA '29



Thoughts from New Quincy: The Last Frontier

On the erasure of attention in an age of constant capture.

BY LUKE WAGNER '26

Conquest used to be geographic. Power was measured in acreage and borders—how many people you could uproot or how many maps you could redraw. For centuries, empires expanded outward: seizing land, minerals, bodies, and entire cultures. Colonialism was an economic project disguised as destiny. Europe treated the world as inventory: gold in the Caribbean, rubber in the Congo, people from West Africa, wheat in India.

But conquest adapts. Once coastlines were occupied and borders set, once every navigable route had been charted, the old model of expansion reached saturation. There was no “new world” left to claim. Yet the force driving colonial expansion didn’t disappear; it changed shape. It shifted from the external world to the human body.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the frontier shifted from territory to labor. What had once been justified through the language of discovery was now justified through the language of productivity. The plantation became the blueprint for industrial capitalism, and the factory became its engine—regimented shifts, mechanized lines, days sliced into punchcards. Rather than exploiting land directly, empires and emerging states learned to convert human time into profit.

Factories reorganized life into measurable units. The clock replaced the compass. Instead of mapping new coasts, states mapped the human body into hours: the shift, the workweek, the clock-in system. Time itself became measurable, ownable. Discipline became the new technology of control. The colonial mindset simply found a different substrate.

But even that form of extraction had limits—there are only so many bodies, only so many hours one can work.

So the frontier shifted again.

The twentieth century introduced a new, quieter form of capture: datafication. What began as bureaucratic record-keeping and early computing infrastructure evolved into something far more expansive. By the late twentieth century, states and corporations had begun to realize that human behavior—what you like, where you move, what you search, and who you speak to—was itself a valuable economic resource. Every action online generated a residue: a trail of preferences and patterns that could be captured, processed, and predicted.

Datafication began as a simple question of storage: how much information could be archived, processed, or indexed. But once that

infrastructure existed, it created possibilities beyond its original purpose.

After 9/11, those possibilities were seized. The Patriot Act fast-tracked forms of data collection and digital surveillance that would have been politically unthinkable just years prior. What the state framed as security quickly produced a new technological norm: mass data retention, metadata tracking, and algorithmic triage. And as soon as these systems were built, corporations realized they could be repurposed for something else entirely. The logic of state surveillance became the template for corporate extraction.

By the 2010s, this system matured into what Shoshana Zuboff calls “surveillance

companies realized that raw behavioral data could only take them so far, they stopped treating users as sources of information and began treating them as sites of influence. Algorithms learned to identify the emotional and cognitive states that made people most manipulable—boredom, loneliness, late-night restlessness, and the quick dopamine hit of novelty. Platforms didn’t just want to collect these states; they wanted to generate them.

Infinite scroll, autoplay, push notifications, the curated “For You” feed—these were not UX flourishes. They were behavioral technologies, exploiting cognitive vulnerabilities: the compulsion to complete patterns, the social need for validation, the fear of missing out, the neurological pull of variable rewards. Data collection evolved into behavioral steering and then into behavioral dependency.

Here, the frontier fully shifted from information to attention. Data reveals who you are; attention gives companies control over who you might become. The goal was no longer to capture your behavior after the fact, but to choreograph it in real time. The more time you spent on a platform, the more predictable you became, and the more predictable you became, the more profitable you were.

In this system, attention isn’t something you give. It’s something pried loose. Platforms learned that the most predatory design is the one that collapses the boundary between desire and reflex, where opening an app stops being a choice and becomes an automatic gesture. Sometimes I notice my

own hand doing this before my mind catches up. I’ll unlock my phone without remembering why, swipe to the same three apps, and only then realize I wasn’t trying to *do* anything—I was just answering a reflex my body had learned.

The result is a mode of capture more intimate than anything that preceded it. Land could be seized. Labor could be disciplined. Data could be tracked. But attention is different. It sits at the root of consciousness—the raw material of perception, decision, and imagination. To colonize attention is to intervene in how a self forms in time.

This is why modern extraction feels totalizing. The conquest no longer happens on land or in factories anymore; it happens in the places where your thoughts take shape. The factory floor has moved into the mind, but what’s being reorganized is your inner life. What’s being extracted isn’t labor or data—it’s the capacity to direct your own attention, the very basis of autonomy.



capitalism.” It was marketed as convenience, efficiency, and personalization. In practice, it was a new kind of gold rush. Companies didn’t need your land or your labor anymore. They needed your behavioral surplus—the unmonetized bits of yourself you left behind without noticing. Every click was a tiny disclosure; every pause, a small confession.

But even this mode of capture had limits. There is only so much behavior you can capture passively. The real breakthrough came when companies realized that data wasn’t just something you could collect—it was something you could engineer. To predict behavior more accurately, they needed to influence it. To influence it, they needed to shape what you paid attention to. And to shape your attention, they needed to occupy the mental space where decisions form.

They needed your attention.

The jump from data to attention wasn’t a natural evolution. It was a break. Once

I realized this shift one afternoon in a moment that should have been forgettable. I was sitting on a low stone wall outside my dorm, doom scrolling Instagram so quickly the images blurred into one long smear of color. The air had that late-autumn chill, but I didn't feel it. When I finally looked up, the sky had shifted from blue to that dimming gold without my noticing. A whole piece of the day had passed, and I had no memory of how I'd spent it. I couldn't recall the last ten posts I'd seen. I couldn't recall opening the app.

That missing sliver of consciousness—that gap—is what extraction looks like now.

The danger of cognitive capture is not just that it consumes your time; it reshapes the kind of person you can become—the texture of your attention, the pace of your thoughts, the inner rhythms that make concentration or presence possible. A mind constantly interrupted doesn't just lose minutes; it loses the capacity for sustained interiority. Studies show that the average uninterrupted attention span online has dropped from roughly 150 seconds to about 47, a decline of more than two-thirds. Over time, your thoughts begin to fracture into the same units the system profits from.

A colonized mind is, first, a distracted mind. Distraction feels harmless—just a few seconds lost—but it compounds. Thoughts splinter into shorter bursts. Your hand moves toward your phone before you register the impulse. It becomes harder to stay with a book, a conversation, or even a feeling without wanting to escape into the scroll. When I watch movies with friends, I ask them to put their phones away for the full two hours. For some, it feels impossible.

The economy of attention thrives on people who cannot sit with complexity, who grow uneasy without stimulation, who accept the rapid tempo of desire as inevitable. When your attention is fragmented, you feel compelled to fill the gaps. When you feel compelled, you click. When you click, you generate data. And when you generate data, the system becomes even better at capturing you. It is a cycle that sustains itself by narrowing the range of what your mind can comfortably hold.

In a world where almost everything feels monetizable, nature remains one of the few realms that resists this logic—not because it is pure or idyllic but because it is structurally incompatible with extraction. A tree does not care how long you look at it. A river does not adjust its pace to keep you entertained. A forest does not interrupt itself every fifteen seconds to recapture your drifting focus. Nature has no algorithm refining your desires and no profit motive woven into its rhythms.

What the natural world offers is not escape but a different temporal architecture. It moves on slow time—cyclical, indifferent, ancient. When you watch clouds shift, nothing is being sold back to you. When you walk through the woods, there is no invisible hand selecting which leaf should fall along your path. In nature, events unfold without reference to you. That indifference is freeing.

Nature is not a refuge because it's peaceful. It is a refuge because it is unextractable at the cognitive level. It returns your mind to you

undivided. It restores boredom, which is really just space. It gives back continuity, which is really just freedom. In a world designed to fracture your attention, the natural world is one of the last places where your thoughts unfold at their own pace rather than at the pace dictated by an algorithm.

This is why tech companies have even flooded platforms with “nature content”—endless videos of sunsets, forests, waves—each one shaved into consumable fragments. The real thing threatens the system not because it is beautiful, but because it is uncommodifiable. The natural world offers a model of existence that cannot be optimized, accelerated, or turned into engagement. It interrupts the economic logic that governs so much of modern life.

The land was taken. Labor was taken. Data was taken. Now the frontier is the mind.

Which means the last freedom we have lies in how we choose to give our attention—and to whom. If extraction today operates internally, then resistance must, at least in part, operate there as well.

Nature offers a similar kind of return. It is not the antidote to technology, nor is it a purer space untouched by capitalism. It is something more subtle and more necessary: a reminder that not everything exists to extract value from you. It offers a counter-logic rooted in being a human instead of speed, presence instead of profit, life instead of accumulation.

I only started to understand this once I began meditating every morning. For five minutes, I sit with nothing—no notifications, no feeds, no stimulus—and it feels like reacquainting myself with a version of my mind I had forgotten. The

quiet doesn't fix anything. But it reminds me what it feels like to have an attention that isn't being pulled, prodded, or optimized—tiny acts of resistance against a world that would prefer my mind fragmented.

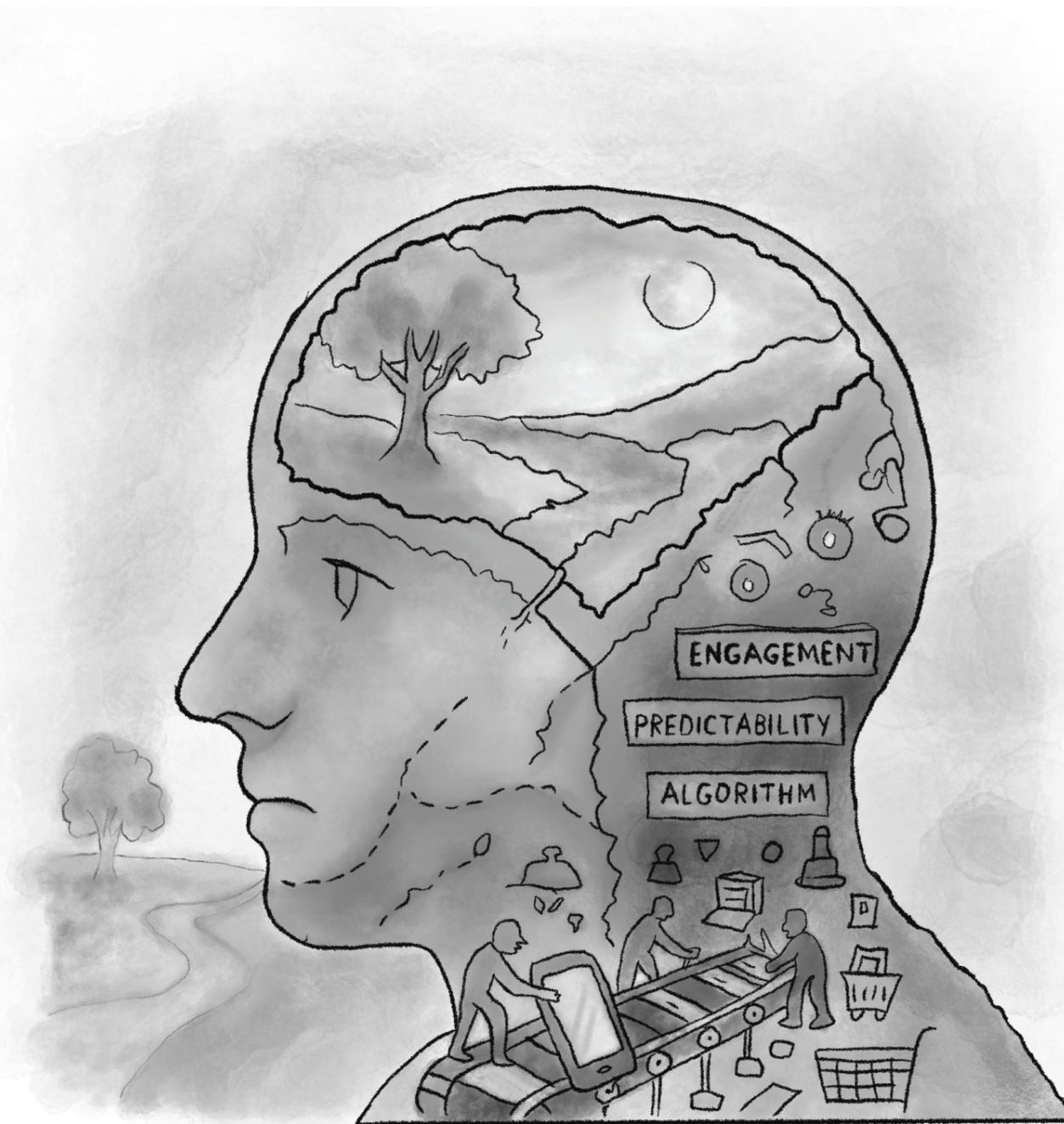
They don't save me, but they help me remember what it feels like to inhabit my own attention. Maybe that's the truest form of freedom left: choosing, even briefly, to be present in a world that profits when you are not.

What worries me most isn't just what's being taken from us—it's what we stop being able to understand on our own. A society that can't hold its attention can't hold memory, conviction, or even a shared sense of what's real. The battle over attention is not just a personal one. It decides what kind of selves we can become, and what kind of public we can sustain. If the mind is the new frontier, then the real stakes of distraction are not productivity or wellness but the future of human agency itself.

If attention is the last territory to defend, then deciding what gets to claim it is the closest thing we have to freedom.

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**GRAPHICS BY
MIRANDA CHAO HWANG '28 AND
CARA CRONIN '28**



A Tale of Two Presidents

Selective rage and University response in times of crisis.

BY NOAH BASDEN '29

Let there be no mistake: Claudine Gay made mistakes. Her 2023 Congressional hearing on antisemitism was, by all intents and purposes, a catastrophe, and her subsequent plagiarism scandal, though more accurately described, in my view, as a political witch hunt, was a low point for the University. That much we can all agree on.

Billionaires bawled, Congress members signed letters demanding her resignation, and the media was in uproar. I wonder why this choir didn't sing when it came to former University President Larry Summers. Jeffery Epstein's "Wing Man," Summers, who had already been embroiled in controversy following sexist comments in 2005, was allowed to slip out of the spotlight quietly. No lights, minimal cameras, little action.

He never faced coordinated political pressure, and the University's donors didn't shrink away as they did when it was Gay's neck on the chopping block. I wonder why. The differing reactions to Summers and Gay highlight a pattern of selective outrage and responses to wrongdoing that respond not simply to misconduct but to the identities of the individuals involved.

Many would point to the most obvious differences between the two as explanations for the divergent reactions. Visual factors like race or sex are convenient narratives the media often jumps to, and while those things definitely played a part, the deeper explanation lies in priorities and perceptions.

That being said, the racial and gendered subtext in the treatment of these two public figures cannot be ignored. Summers, the white, former Chief Economist at the World Bank, President of Harvard, and Treasury Secretary with deep ties to the elite, was given time and institutional patience. Gay, a black woman who had just ascended to one of the most prestigious academic posts in the world, doing so amid a broader conservative backlash against DEI initiatives, was offered none of that grace, despite the University's initial declaration of "unanimous" support.

This is yet another example of the double standards women and people of color face every day. We can't afford to fail because there are no safety nets, and even when they exist, they seem to have holes just big enough for women and people of color to fall through. When mistakes by powerful white men are chalked up as faux pas, and mistakes by Black women are treated as incompetence,

the pattern becomes hard to miss.

Still, the differing reactions go beyond what stands out to the naked eye. They reveal something about moral outrage and collective priorities. Gay's lapse of judgment during her congressional hearing was treated as a crisis of immense proportions. You would have thought, from the number of tweets from a certain divisive billionaire Harvard alum, that she had committed an unforgivable act. In reality, her comment was a reactionary, albeit regrettable, answer that was promptly contextualized.

What *is* unforgivable is the lack of response from the institutions and voices that claim to stand for moral clarity and accountability. The issue is larger than Summers alone; it starts from the top. It is telling that our nation's President labeled the Epstein files a "hoax," choosing partisanship over institutional integrity and justice for the victims, many of whom were children.

The President would rather play politics than pursue potential further accountability for those unprotected by status. It's a damning reflection of where we are as a country. We chose this.

It should be noted that Summers has no allegations of criminal wrongdoing regarding his connection to Epstein. This distinction is important because my point isn't to manufacture guilt by association but to critique the asymmetry of scrutiny. The lack of scrutiny on Summers's relationship with Epstein was disastrous from the start.

Epstein was convicted of sex crimes in 2008, but during Summers's time as President, he was offered an office on campus, which he visited more than 40 times, and was given the title "Visiting Fellow" despite being wildly underqualified. Were there no alarm bells? It wasn't until 2019, when the full scope of his crimes became public, that the University opened an investigation into its relationship with him.

Even in 2008, it wasn't as though his conviction was a secret; he was a registered sex offender granted access to Harvard's resources. This wasn't an oversight but gross negligence: a decision shaped by selective ignorance within an institution led by Epstein's "wing man." When Epstein's crimes became impossible to defend, *only then* did investigations begin.

Eleven years too late, long after the damage to his victims had been done.

That's the real indictment; that's what we should be outraged about.

This is not to trivialize Gay's missteps, but she erred, apologized, and contextualized her comments almost immediately. Summers, on the other hand, maintained a relationship with a registered sex offender who frequented the very campus he, as president, was entrusted with protecting.

Though Summers apologized for what he described as a "misguided decision to continue communicating with Mr. Epstein," this apology only came after his email correspondence was revealed to the public. Why is it only now that he feels "deeply ashamed" in the face of criticism? Where was his shame when he decided to prioritize a personal friendship over the standards expected of the positions he held?

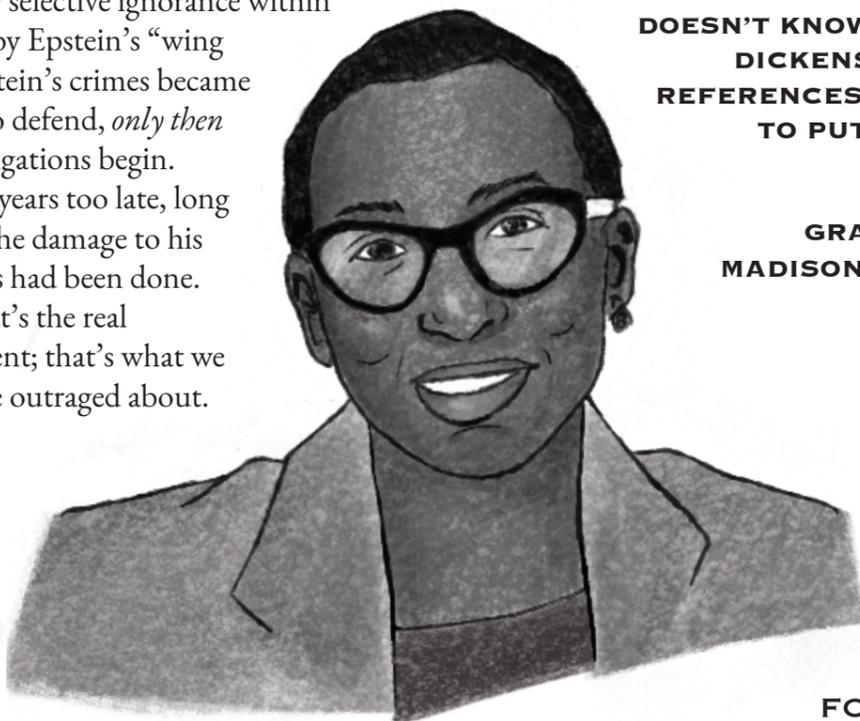
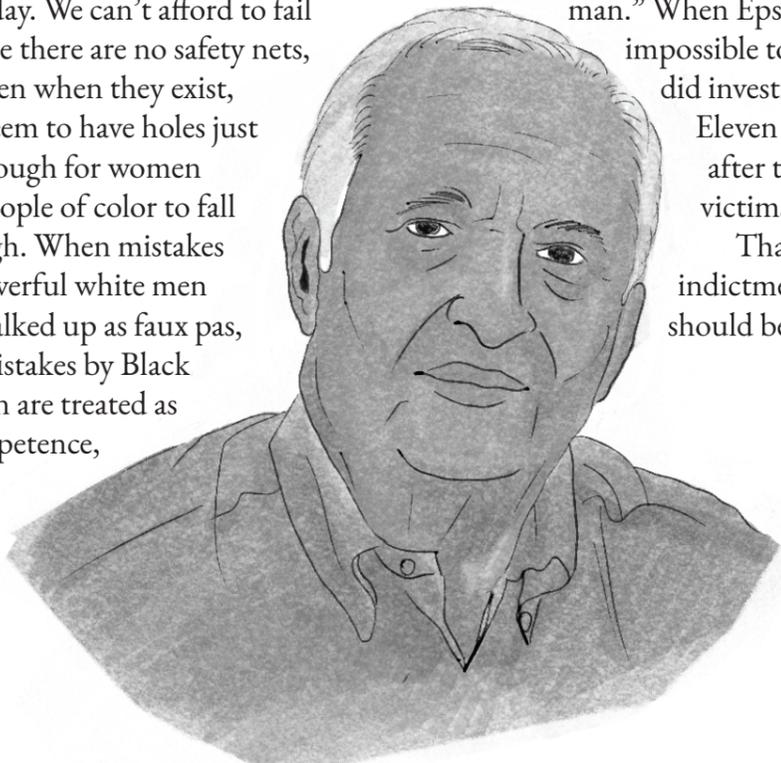
This idea of politics over protection is especially relevant to the Harvard student body. We, as students, are the people unprotected by status or tenure, and we should be able to study in a space where those in power aren't tempted to use it for their gain at our expense.

Institutional hypocrisy doesn't just undermine the University's principles; it actively erodes trust. When the University applies its own accountability measures unevenly, it teaches its students that protection and university support are conditional and that speaking out comes with risks. If there is uncertainty around the systems set up to safeguard students, it breeds a culture of silence in the face of misconduct. We have a right to know that no matter our status, we are all treated and protected the same way.

Summers's life has been marked by the best of times and the worst of times, but there will be another Larry Summers; there may never be another Claudine Gay. Men like Summers can stumble and be replaced. Women like Gay must work twice as hard to reach the same positions, and when they fall, the world takes notice, and they fall twice as hard. We can only hope that in the future, wisdom prevails and foolishness is held to account, so that our "best of times [and] worst of times" become lessons learned, not realities repeated.

NOAH BASDEN '29 (NHBASDEN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) DOESN'T KNOW ENOUGH DICKENS FOR THE REFERENCES HE TRIES TO PUT INTO HIS PIECES.

GRAPHICS BY MADISON KRUG '27







An Ode to the Penny

Reflecting on memories with my grandfather and our love for the penny.

BY KALVIN FRANK '28

"This is a 1956 Pennsylvania minted wheat penny," Grandpa remarked as he showed me the tiny reddish-brown coin. 10-year-old me grinned with pride. The almost 70-year-old coin was an incredible find; the average coin's lifespan is only 25 years, and most collectors had grabbed up all the wheat pennies when they ended their production. But, secondly and maybe more importantly, I loved collecting coins because I was with my grandpa. It felt like a treasure hunt that we could complete together.

On Nov. 12, the last penny was minted after 232 years of production. The cost of making them has become too high to justify the coin's value. Most people shrug at this and move on; realistically, no one in our generation uses coins anyway. But I see it differently. I see the penny as a symbol of a simpler time; a time where I had fewer worries; where all that mattered was being with my grandpa and filling in the last of our coin collection books. Just as the U.S. has seemed to outgrow the penny, our lives have overwhelmed the practice of collecting coins.

"Schools Closed Today: Kalamazoo Public Schools... Lawton Community School..."

It was 2016, and I sat cross-legged staring at the TV long before dawn. A snowstorm had buried Western Michigan, and I was waiting for my school to appear on the little ticker at the bottom of the screen.

"...Lakeview School District."

YES FINALLY! Channel 8 just confirmed—IT'S A SNOW DAY!

Shortly after, Dad dropped my sister and me off at my grandparents' house across town. As we walked in, the crackling of bacon filled my ears as Grandpa prepared breakfast. After a generous helping of eggs, bacon, and toast, my sister settled in for a TV show while Grandpa and I snuck off to see the coins he had collected for us this past month.

Grandpa is a patient, kind, and aged man. He can best be described as a geek: over music and instruments—dedicating his life to teaching others how to play as a middle school band director; Ohio State football, where he played in the "Best Damn Band in the Land;" cars, though he could never afford a Porsche, he was an avid 20-year subscriber to "Road & Track," showing off the latest in Supercars; and of course, our coin collection.

While my family often poked fun at his geekiness, I have always believed Grandpa is my role model, and many of his obsessions fascinated me. I played the trombone because Grandpa did; I was an Ohio State fan because Grandpa was; The only thing I ever asked for for Christmas was Matchbox cars because I played them with Grandpa. I became fascinated with coins because Grandpa had shown them to me.

On his coarse basement carpet, we huddled around his various coin books—a coffee can of coins sat between us. The coins were poured into a small pile in front of us, jiggling as they fell onto the carpet. One by one, we picked out the coins to examine. We started with pennies: after fishing them out of the cluster, first, we looked at the year, then the mint location. D was Denver, P was Philadelphia, and, if we were fortunate, S was San Francisco. I often had to look closely because the letters were too small for Grandpa to see.

For hours, we would go through the coins. If we found an unfilled slot, I would set the inspected piece, and Grandpa would press his weight until the piece popped in. I was always impressed that, despite being over 70 years old, he seemed to remember which coins to add to the book. Grandpa would tell me stories about where he was the year a coin was minted, or what he remembered about the symbols on the back. He told me about how his penny collection was stolen when a student broke into his old house, and how we were rebuilding what he started 50 years ago.

It was amazing and simple. Life was simple. I wasn't studying for a physics exam or stressing about upcoming assignments. I was just with Grandpa.

I loved the time I spent with Grandpa, but life moves fast, and we both grew older. Snow days spent at my grandparents' house had become fewer and fewer. Grandpa and I still sorted coins, but his hands grew shakier, and my schedule grew busier. On snow days, I was often doing homework, binging a show on Netflix, or out skating on the lake with friends. Life brought new pleasures and challenges, and slowly we stopped our tradition of sorting coins.

Grandpa's memory wasn't always keen on finding new coins. My stubborn grandparents stopped getting change and finally switched to credit and debit.

As our old tradition slipped away, it was replaced by laughing with the family at the dinner table or by intense political talk when he drove me

somewhere. When I moved to Boston, sorting coins became all but a memory, lost to the past. In a way, I felt guilty that the tradition stopped, but we had both seemed to have grown out of it in our own way.

This past Thanksgiving break, I was at my grandparents' new house, without the basement rug or the tub of Matchbox cars. Something about the news of the ending of penny production had been sitting in the back of my mind. So after dinner, I slipped away to the guest bedroom where the small containers stacked with coins were kept.

I opened the top drawer and was met with that familiar metallic scent. I ran my fingers across the pages, mostly full, with just a few open spots waiting for us to return to them. I brought the books out to the table where everyone was talking. Grandpa smiled and remarked, "I was just thinking about those." He still kept coins for us every once in a while, though we never seemed to get to them.

Even though we were still on the hunt for countless pennies, quarters, dimes, and nickels, we didn't sort the coins that night, there were more important things to do. But we found time to look through the books together, staring at the empty coin slots and remembering the good times; though, I can't help but feel mad about the missing 1977 Denver penny.

The penny hasn't really been worth much for years. A half-gallon of milk in my hometown costs 428 pennies; a pack of gum costs 219. We don't think about the value of money much anymore. My grandparents used to have to count out nickels, dimes, and pennies to buy their cravings. Now I just tap my iPhone to the card reader at CVS and walk out with a Celsius.

All those hours spent on the rough carpet, I thought, were a treasure hunt and adding value to our collection. But as I look back, it was never about the value in the books, but the memories I made putting those books together with Grandpa. Someday, I'll likely inherit those coin books. My financial advisor might tell me to sell that book of pennies for the thousand I could make off of the collection, but I never would. The reminder of my grandfather, and of the time we spent together, would and will forever be of more value to me.

The penny is ending its production, and most saw the news articles and thought, "It's nearly worthless anyway." But what I thought about wasn't its monetary value; instead, this news was a reminder about time. Time spent with family. Time uninterrupted by school or stress. Time that life can get in the way of, unless we choose to protect it.



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SPENDING TIME WITH
HIS GRANDFATHER.**

**GRAPHIC BY
TRISCHELLE
AFIHENE '27**

ARTS

Views from 12 Arrow Street: Harvard Yale 2025

13 photos for The Game's 141st iteration.

BY JORDAN WASSERBERGER '27



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(JWASSERBERGER@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) WOULD LOVE
TO PHOTOGRAPH ONE HARVARD
WIN AGAINST YALE, SO LET'S
HOPE NEXT YEAR IS IT!**

Verdi Requiem, an Unforgettable Experience

The Boston Philharmonic, four world-class soloists, and conductor Benjamin Zander turn an evening about death into something startlingly alive.

BY PHILIPPOS ALEBACHEW '29

In the afternoon of Nov. 23, I joined over 2,000 people in Fenway's Symphony Hall to hear the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra take on legendary Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi's "Messa da Requiem." The colossal venue went silent as Benjamin Zander walked out to begin his pre-concert talk. Zander, who came to Boston from England in 1964 on a Harkness Fellowship to study at Harvard, has since become a local fixture, founding both the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra.

Before the music began, Zander spoke for 45 minutes about what the audience would hear, explaining how Verdi's intervals build emotional meaning and how the Requiem has moved listeners for nearly 150 years, both secular and religious. His reverence carried into the next day, when he welcomed me into his home, opened his color-marked score, and revealed just how much care and preparation go into helping newcomers and seasoned listeners feel the piece's full grandeur.

"The Verdi Requiem is one of the greatest pieces of music, one of the greatest works of art created, and although it is a piece about death, it leaves you with a great sense of courage and lust for life," Zander told the *Harvard Independent*. "The music is full of love of life, varied and powerful and tender at the same time. Everybody comes out joyful."

Verdi's "Requiem," a vast musical setting of the Catholic Mass for the dead, has a history as grand as its sound. Inspired by the 1873 death of writer Alessandro Manzoni and an earlier failed plan for a joint memorial mass for Rossini, Verdi ultimately composed the entire work himself. Though built on liturgical text, the piece centers on the biblical Day of Judgment, using musical drama rather than doctrine. A non-believer, Verdi treated the liturgy as shared emotional language, channeling fear, longing, hope, and our confrontation with mortality.

When I walked into Symphony Hall with no knowledge of this history and unable to read a single note of music, I was curious about what an hour and a half of Verdi would sound like in a space that grand. From above, the hall unfolded like a carved wooden bowl, holding a stage packed with players and singers. When Zander concluded his talk, the warmth in his earlier explanations shifted into something more electric. The room grew still as Requiem—the first of the seven movements—began, and the chorus murmured the opening line: "Requiem aeternam," Eternal rest.

The Movements

The iconic "Dies Irae" movement delivers the Requiem's first major rupture. The bass drum hit with a force you could feel in your chest, strings plunged downward in a rush, winds added piercing intensity, and the chorus erupted in terrifying cries—all amplifying

a sense of helplessness before something immense. Zander had warned that this music was meant to frighten 1870s audiences; even today, it still does.

One of the most moving moments in the "Dies Irae" came with the "Recordare," the duet between mezzo-soprano Daniela Mack and soprano Ailyn Pérez. Their voices rested beside each other with a balanced steadiness, bringing a rare calmness into a work defined by extremes. Pérez's clarity and Mack's warmth held the space with ease.

After the turbulence of "Dies Irae," the Offertorio (Offertory) arrived as the first real point of release. Its three-part structure shaped the flow of the movement: an opening led by the violas and cellos with a gentler warmth, a middle section that shifted toward more unsettled harmonies, and a final return to steady calm as the lines folded back into one another. Winds and strings passed notes between them with ease, and the chorus entered with a firm, centered tone that carried cleanly across the hall.



The Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of Benjamin Zander, performed Verdi's Requiem on Sunday, November 23, at Symphony Hall in Boston, with featured soloists (l to r) mezzo-soprano Daniella Mack, soprano Ailyn Perez, tenor John Osborn, and bass Maharram Huseynov, supported by Chorus pro Musica under the direction of Jamie Kirsch.

Momentum changed again in the "Sanctus" (Holy), one of Verdi's most intricate fugues, which came together with tight precision. Each entrance was crisp, and from the balcony it was easy to hear the layers build into a bright, full sound. There was a widening sense of space, a serenity settling briefly before the final movements.

The "Agnus Dei" (Lamb of God) unfolded as one of the most vocal-centered sections of the night, its shape carried largely by the two soloists, chorus, and woodwinds. Pérez and Mack led it in unison octaves, their voices matching with striking precision while the soprano line set much of the movement's tone. The woodwinds supported them with a light, steady foundation, giving the paired voices enough space to project the clarity and focus the writing demands.

A quieter atmosphere settled in the "Lux Aeterna" (Light Eternal), shaped by the lower strings in a register that emitted an ominous, dark tone. The movement unfolded almost like a brief exchange, with mezzo-soprano Daniela Mack, tenor Arturo Chacón-Cruz, and bass Peixin Chen trading lines. Near the end, a lone flute lifted the texture with a hopeful line, soon joined by other winds, ending the section on something close to a high note before the Requiem's final turn.

Everything converged in the "Libera Me" (Deliver Me), the longest and most dramatic part of the Requiem. A whispered opening restored the hall to silence, and Pérez's entrance carried the same intensity

she sustained throughout the evening. The chorus moved between near-silence and full sound, giving the movement its shape. The final rising line worked like a send-off, lifting upward without landing, echoing the text's closing plea.

When the last sound faded, the hall stayed silent long enough that I wasn't sure anyone would be the first to move. After the final note was played, it felt as if everyone's breath had been carried out with that final cry, leaving the audience suspended in the same stillness the piece ends on. I had never felt a performance hold a room that firmly. Walking out into the November air, I kept replaying moments in my head—the weight of the "Dies Irae," the calm of the Recordare, the final plea of the "Libera Me." It was the greatest live musical performance I had ever seen, and I left feeling overwhelmed in a way I didn't expect when I first stepped into Symphony Hall.

Zander often says that great music can reach anyone, even people who have never read a note on a page. After hearing the Requiem in a hall that was full and attentive, I understood exactly what he meant. The scale, the sound, and the unity of the orchestra, chorus, and soloists created an experience that made the Requiem feel both monumental and deeply human.

His approach to explaining music traces back to his time at Harvard, where Zander served as a tutor in Lowell House and enrolled in the celebrated course HUM 6: "Interpretation of Literature," which analyzed poems in great depth. The class was taught by Reuben Brower, and his brother-in-law, Neil Rudenstine, would later go on to teach it as well. That detailed, line-by-line approach to close reading shaped the way Zander learned to think about musical interpretation. "I came here because I wanted to study how I could make what he [Rudenstine] does with literature, with poetry, relevant to what I do with music," Zander said. "We would take a poem and look at every word, every inflection, and really get into the meaning of it."

He also worked closely with students, including a young Yo-Yo Ma '76, whose pianist at the time was Zander's first wife. Those connections continued for decades, forming a long relationship between Zander and the musical community in Boston.

His work, recordings, and educational projects can be explored at benjaminzander.org, the site he continues to build as part of his musical legacy.

The full performance is available to stream, and the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra have more concerts scheduled throughout the season. Details, recordings, and upcoming dates can be found at bostonphil.org.

PHILIPPOS ALEBACHEW '29 (PHILIPPOS.ALEBACHEW@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WILL ADD THIS PIECE TO HIS SPOTIFY ROTATION.

GRAPHIC BY CHRISTY ZEMBROWSKI '28 AND PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL MARDY



The Indy 2025 Holiday Gift Guide

Gift ideas to make your holiday shopping easier this season.

BY MEENA BEHRINGER '27

The holiday season brings high spirits, festive music, and the dreaded stress of finding the most spectacular gift for just about everyone in your life—a list that somehow keeps growing as the semester wraps up. The Indy's 2025 Holiday Gift Guide has you covered, with curated picks for Harvard students, whether you're looking for something funny, thoughtful, or a classic can't-go-wrong gift in between.

For the Academic Weapon

Blue-light glasses are a must-have when you're staring at a computer screen for what feels like every waking second of the day. Check out Amazon for some chic options, or stop by Warby Parker in the Square if you're looking to splurge. While some see this accessory as merely a fashion statement, blue-light glasses can help reduce eye strain and defend against long hours of screen time exposure, taking the edge of Lamont all-nighters and helping you look somewhat awake.

For Your Roommate

You sleep next to each other every night, so you might as well do it in style. For that roommate that everyone already jokes you're married to, nothing says commitment like matching pajamas. Not only is it a fun, personalized gift, but it also makes crawling into bed after a long day of class even more appealing. In fact, any shared dorm accessory would do—a candle to produce a calming scent, a succulent to take care of together, or a new wall print to add some decoration.

For the Coffee Addict

No Harvard gift guide would be complete without mention of a Blank Street or Blue Bottle gift card—staples in the Square. Given the incredulous caffeine consumption that takes place on this campus, you can't go wrong

with either. I bet no one would turn down free coffee for a week, especially during finals period. If they have their own coffee machine, consider a bag of roasted beans from Pavement or a monogrammed tumbler they can show off.

For the Friend Who's Always on the Go

We all have places to be, but there are some people who never catch a break. For those running from meeting to meeting across campus, a dependable and large water bottle is essential to staying hydrated throughout the day. Owala's are campus favorites for a reason;



the plethora of color options and reliable insulation will ensure they stay hydrated and their water stays cold no matter how many times they speed-walk through the Yard. Though, we all could benefit from a new water bottle, so consider this your sign.

For Your TF

Stationary is a classic gift, and Bob Slate Stationer has you covered for just about anything stationary-related. Your TF will appreciate a Moleskine notebook, a box of chocolates as an office-hours snack, a fancy black pen to help their grading sessions, or even an apple just to complete the stereotype.

For Your Best-Dressed Friend

It's hard to get a gift for the person who always looks put-together in a stylish outfit, no matter what time

of day. As the weather gets colder in Cambridge, a pair of knit gloves is a forgotten accessory that goes with every outfit while also keeping them warm. Check out the boutique Mint Julep in the Square or trek out to Boston for options at J. Crew or Aritzia. While neutral colors are a classic, a pop of color might also be appreciated—burgundy, forest green, or navy to elegantly brighten up winter layers.

For the Friend in their Wellness Era

We all know that one person who is obsessed with getting eight hours of sleep and a workout every day. While definitely on the pricer side, an Oura ring is the perfect gift for anyone looking to track their sleep, recovery, heart rate, and other metrics to improve their physical and mental health. If you're looking for a more affordable option, try a new yoga mat they can bring to their hot pilates class or even a set of workout classes to Handle Bar or Breathe.

For Your Club's Secret Santa Assignment

I've lost count of how many times I've gotten assigned someone I've met once and barely spoken two words to—and I know I'm not alone. When you're searching for a personalized gift to get someone you aren't personal with, it's best to stick to universally loved items. Everyone loves a bag of gourmet chocolate or candy from Cardullo's, or a variety of minimalistic school accessories from Muji which just opened in the Square. And, maybe suggest doing a White Elephant next time.

**MEENA BEHRINGER '27
(MEENABEHRINGER@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) HAS NO IDEA
WHAT TO GET HER SECRET
SANTA.**

**GRAPHIC BY CAMERON
BERNIER '29**

SPORTS

A Love Letter to My Sport

Saying goodbye to a core piece of my college identity.

BY KATE OLIVER '26

While most of the student body was at Yale the Friday before Thanksgiving break, the 22 members of the Harvard field hockey team were at Duke University, grappling with the fact that our season had come to an end after a tough loss in the NCAA semifinals; the game had been tied scoreless until the 56th minute. Our team's six seniors, myself included, were abruptly faced with the reality that our collegiate careers had ended.

Four seasons of blood and sweat had ended in tears from a game we firmly believed was going to go our way. Having gone 19-1 that far in the season and facing a 1-1 record against our opponent, we were in disbelief that our season had ended. This was the culmination of our careers at Harvard: finally making it past the Elite Eight and having a true shot at winning a national title. To fall short of that goal stung especially hard for the seniors, as many of us had promised our head coach we would leave after winning a national championship.

While this loss will sting for a long time, many mentors in my life were quick to remind me that this is by no means a bad way to go out. I have had the chance to be part of four uniquely amazing seasons with HFH. While each year looked different, the sisterhood on this team has stood tall and remained a constant comfort for me at this school.

There is also no way to put into words the joys and pains of my journey with this sport. I first picked up a stick in PE at my elementary school during third grade. I had to choose between flag football and field hockey; I gravitated toward the sport that all of the other girls did. I almost instantly fell in love with the sport. When I got in the car that day, I asked my mom if I could start playing outside of school. Luckily, she supported the decision based on my sheer enthusiasm, and I soon had the opportunity

to start playing.

I did not know then, at the ripe age of nine, that I wanted to play collegiate sports. I spent eight years playing for a club based out of St. Louis before spending my senior year on a team from Texas. I had gotten the chance to travel internationally to play and had friends at programs all over the country and the world. I chose to play field hockey at Harvard because I clicked with the girls on the team, the coaching staff, and the academic rigor they expected. Having the chance to play for this program is one of the biggest gifts I've had thus far in life.



I joined the team not fully knowing what to expect. I had only ever played American-style field hockey, which lacks aspects of technical refinement in favor of overall athleticism. Upon arriving at Harvard, I was confronted by new structures and shifts in what different positions were called by my new European teammates. I doubted my ability to fit into the HFH system. The first weeks of school were spent trying to juggle not only a new team environment but also a new college experience, knowing practically no one outside the teammates I had just met.

As every athlete at this school does, I had to show up every day, regardless of how I felt. My earlier years in sports had always taught me that projecting weakness was never an option, and it was a skill that served me well as I was attempting to navigate

school, sport, and sleep. I slowly began to find my place and felt even more at home once the season ended; I suddenly had time back in my schedule to go to office hours and get meals with friends.

Then came the spring, with its early morning lifts and practice in the Quadrangle Recreational Athletic Center. I really needed to dig deep mentally as I was scooting to the Quad with tears streaming down my face from the wind. I fell back on the little girl who fell in love with the sport at its core, and the version of myself who felt so much joy from knowing that this lift, practice, or game would not be the last time I got the chance to do what I loved.

Outside of the joy of being with my teammates, that euphoria will be the part of field hockey I miss the most. I know that other forms of it will come along as I figure out what type of athlete I am going to be moving forward, but it will be hard to find something that makes me smile as much as a big squeeze as we are about to walk out for line-up announcements. I will miss dancing in the locker room before a game and continuing to ask my coach to play country music at practice (across four years, I was never successful).

For all the pain, physical and mental, that my sport brought me, I will look back on it with joy and pride that I made it through four college seasons. HFH was the best and hardest thing I've done thus far in my life. My four years with the program have prepared me for life beyond, making me a more resilient and empathetic person. This program has forever changed me for the better and left me with memories that I will cherish for life. And so, cheers to my sisters, the hottest girls on campus!

KATE OLIVER '26 (KOLIVER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS BEYOND EXCITED TO EXPERIENCE HARVARD AS A NARP.

GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA RYMAN '28

Indy Sportsbook: EPL Gameweek 15

A look at the most exciting matchups of this Premier League weekend.

BY ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ '26

The Premier League 2025-26 season has been host to several surprises, from massive injuries to impressive runs of form. The league has been rocked by big signings all season, with Liverpool spending heavily on Alexander Isak, Florian Wirtz, and Hugo Ekitiké, and many teams following suit.

The current league standings have shattered many early-season predictions. After being recently promoted from the English League Championship, Sunderland A.F.C. has been on a tear and is looking to push into the top five this weekend. Crystal Palace had a strong start to the season and looked like a title contender, but they have dropped points in recent weeks.

Liverpool, the reigning champions, have struggled to find the right squad rotation and may be fighting for a mid-table position if this weekend doesn't go their way. Meanwhile, Arsenal has taken its place at the top of the league standings. Newcastle United F.C. has seen the hardest fall from the top as last season's fifth-place team is struggling to break into the top ten. The uncertainty surrounding league position is at an all-time high this weekend as many closely ranked teams are coming head-to-head. Sportsbook has you covered with a breakdown of Aston Villa vs Arsenal, the matchup of the weekend, and other important games.

Aston Villa vs Arsenal: (-110)

Following last season's sixth-place finish, Aston Villa have continued their excellent form despite some of their starters falling out of the starting lineup. The decline of star striker Ollie Watkins has been the talk of the team as he has gone from 26 goals and assists in the 2024-25 season to just one goal since August. He has suffered no serious injury but seems to be lacking his appetite in front of the goal. Recently, he has been left out of the starting squad for Donyell Malen.

Arsenal has been in phenomenal form all season, dominating the Premier League and the Champions League. Even with major injuries to Viktor Gyökeres, Kai Havertz, and Gabriel Magalhães, Arsenal's substitutes and reserves have stepped up big time. In their most recent Champions League matchup against one of the favorites,

FC Bayern Munich, fans were concerned about who Mikel Arteta would pick to fill the hole left by Magalhães' injury. However, Cristhian Mosquera assumed the role, shutting down Harry Kane's buildup play that would have facilitated Bayern's attack.

The defensive stability and press from the Gunners were particularly remarkable as Bayern struggled to string together positive sequences and only found success through quick counterattacks launched from long diagonals by Joshua Kimmich, which led to Lennart Karl's goal. Arteta demands this high defensive work rate from his players, resulting in the most team clean sheets this season. Arsenal has shown they have the



squad depth to answer stacking injuries, so we have Arsenal as the winner of this matchup.

Manchester City vs Sunderland: (-425)

Recently, promoted second-division teams have been entering the Premier League with a vengeance that is stifled early in the season. Sunderland is the real deal, unafraid to compete against big teams and change their playstyle to get a point. Their ties to Aston Villa and Arsenal have been season-deciding results, and their recent win against Chelsea reminded other teams that they are here to stay.

Nonetheless, Manchester City is as threatening as ever and filled with difference makers. The talent throughout their squad is endless, but the deciding factor will be the number of goals Manchester City will give up. Erling Haaland has been even more dominant this season, leading the league in

goals, but his consistency has gotten swept under the rug because of his unflashy play.

As a Cityzen, we cannot make intelligent defensive decisions to save our lives, and it seems the better we play, the more likely our back line will make an error. Sunderland will likely exploit these weaknesses on counterattacks as City attempts to maintain possession and create overloads in Sunderland's half. Without a doubt, this game will be high scoring, but I have Manchester City squeezing by.

Bournemouth vs Chelsea: (+115)

Chelsea is our heavy favorite following big wins against F.C. Barcelona in the UEFA Champions League and a tie against Arsenal in gameweek 13. Bournemouth have struggled in recent weeks against top table teams, losing to Manchester City, Aston Villa, and Sunderland.

Their defensive frailties have become increasingly apparent, with the squad conceding multiple goals in five of their last six outings. Meanwhile, Chelsea's attacking unit has hit peak form, making them well-positioned to dominate this matchup.

Spurs vs Brentford: (+280)

The fight for the middle of the table has arrived, and it will not disappoint. Tottenham has been a torment of mixed emotions, dropping points to bottom table teams and getting thrashed by quality sides. Brentford has been impressive despite selling its attacking stars, Yoane Wissa and Bryan Mbeumo, to other Premier League teams. Brentford's Igor Thiago has filled this gap as the second-highest goal scorer thus far. Given both teams' lack of consistent defense, this game will likely result in a tie.

As always, the National Gambling Hotline can be reached at 1-800-522-4700.

ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ '26 (ALEJANDROSANCHEZ@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS WAITING FOR ARSENAL TO BLOW THEIR LEAD LIKE THEY ALWAYS DO.

GRAPHIC BY ANNABELLA BURTON-BOONE '29

The Fall of Sky Sports Halo

How one sports network exemplified the undervaluing of women in sports media.

BY WHITNEY FORD '28

Forty-eight hours after its launch on Nov. 13, a massive wave of backlash pushed Sky Sports, the preeminent sports broadcaster in the U.K., to shutter its female-oriented TikTok channel Halo. The social media page had been launched with the message: “Introducing Sky Sports Halo – the lil sis of Sky Sports. A new TikTok channel created specifically for female sports fans. We’re ALL about sports and championing female athletes. We’re here for the culture, community, and connection. We don’t just watch sports - we live it.”

However, the channel’s content drew criticism almost immediately, as fans dubbed Halo patronizing, sexist, and degrading. The page featured content in a glowing pink font as well as heavy-handed references to female popular culture. One video featured a clip of a goal by Manchester City soccer player Erling Haaland that read: “How the matcha + hot girl walk combo hits.” When fans shared their disdain for the post’s tone in the comments, the official account entered the conversation to respond that the critique was “ruining the vibes.” Another particularly cringe-worthy post referenced New York mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani’s recent support for Sky News and Arsenal with the caption: “Thinking about Zohran Mamdani rizzing us and Arsenal up.”

An additional point of controversy was that despite the channel’s stated mission of “championing female athletes” and amplifying women’s voices in sports, the first 11 posts shared by Halo were exclusively focused on male athletes. Though the channel did stream England’s match against New Zealand in the Vitality Netball International Series, its push to promote women’s sports was halfhearted.

As fans took to the comments to voice their criticisms, Halo’s launch quickly proved to be a fiasco. The channel’s simplification of sports and need to transform traditional content to make it feminine directly contradicted its stated mission. Furthermore, the visual branding made the account feel more like a lifestyle page than a source of serious sports coverage—especially when it came to women’s sports. Particularly poignant was the seeming implication that women cannot digest sports content as it is presented on Sky Sports’ existing accounts. In a Reddit

thread discussing Halo’s failure, one fan quipped: “Could someone translate this into a pink sparkly font so my matcha-riddled girlbrain can understand it?”

Most of all, many fans felt as if the tone-deaf launch and execution of Halo signified a step backwards for women in sports. The pinkified channel not only failed to make a serious commitment to promoting female athletes but also trivialized women’s interest in sports with the “pop-culture wrapper” placed around the account.

In an interview with BBC Newsbeat, 23-year-old sports enthusiast Emily Trees



voiced the concerns of the masses in addressing the damaging impact of Halo as the “little sister” of Sky Sports.

“We’ve spent the last 50 years trying to come away from the stereotypes around women’s sport, and trying to make women’s sport seen as an entity in itself rather than just as an extension of what men can do. We deserve our own space, something that’s ours. We don’t need to be the ‘little sister’ to anyone,” she said.

After Sky Sports announced that it would cease all activity on the social page under immense pressure from fans, all existing posts were removed. In their place, one new post with a statement by the broadcaster: “Our intention for Halo was to create a space alongside our existing social channels for new, young, female fans. We’ve listened. We didn’t get it right. As a result, we’re stopping all activity on this account. We’re learning and remain as committed as ever to creating spaces where fans feel included and inspired.” Since then, the account has gone private, and all traces of Halo have been wiped from all official Sky Sports accounts.

Ultimately, the problem lies in the consistent undervaluing of women as athletes, fans, and contributors in sports culture and media; both are built on structures that position men as the

default and women as the exception. As demonstrated by Halo’s content, female athletes are routinely treated as secondary. Women’s sports receive drastically less media coverage than men’s sports and are often perceived as less interesting. Furthermore, there is a large pay disparity between male and female athletes that is exacerbated by the fact that women have access to fewer youth programs, less funding, and poorer facilities in comparison to men. Female athletes are expected to fit into a system constructed around male athletes and have been sidelined in the process.

The central point driven home by the Halo fiasco is that female fans are not respected as genuine contributors to the sports community. Women in sports are constantly questioned about their knowledge, treated as interlopers, or worst of all, stereotyped as liking sports for aesthetic reasons, or because of attractive male athletes. Halo failed precisely because it reflected these beliefs in its marketing toward women.

The solution to accommodating women in sports is not to “girlify” athletic culture. Women should be recognized as full, legitimate participants—both as athletes and fans—whose knowledge, passion, and talent are assumed rather than questioned. Achievements should be recognized without comparison or condescension, and female fans should be treated as consequential followers of the game rather than outsiders.

In the end, we do not need Halo. True gender equality in sports requires the integration of women into mainstream coverage rather than relegating them to separate “pinkified” spaces. In order to make a meaningful impact, broadcasters like Sky Sports must make a committed effort to allow women to shape the narratives, analysis, and leadership that are so central to sports media. Women are not a market demographic, nor an exception to the norm. They are crucial contributors to the world of sports, no less legitimate than their male counterparts.

WHITNEY FORD '28 (WFORD@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES SPORTS FOR THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY NUALA MERNIN '29

Fantasy Roundup: Week 13

A recap of the notable games from the NFL this past week.

BY TYLER DANG '28

As we approach the end of the season, every remaining game carries more weight for playoff hopes. Preseason favorites like the Kansas City Chiefs and Baltimore Ravens are now barely in the race after unexpectedly poor performances. Meanwhile, early standouts like the Indianapolis Colts and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers have slowed down after hot starts. And teams like my Tennessee Titans, unfortunately, continue to disappoint. For full team rosters, see Week 0's issue.

First and Lowell (6-6) vs Bring it Dome (8-4): 109.18-100.82

Top performers: De'Von Achane (19.4) | James Cook III (18.7)

Underperformers: Saquon Barkley (5.6) | Jaxon Smith-Njigba (4.3)

Kirkland Cousins (4-8) vs Pfirst Down (9-3): 73.64-148.8

Top performers: Travis Kelce (15.5) | Rashee Rice (29.4)

Underperformers: Lamar Jackson (6.54) | Broncos D/ST (1.0)

The Ball Currier (4-8) vs The Inn-Zone (5-7): 121.94-106.26

Top performers: CeeDee Lamb (24.2) | Bijan Robinson (30.3)

Underperformers: Zay Flowers (0.6) | Rome Odunze (2.8)

Standout Games:

Packers @ Lions: 31-24

In a rematch from the first gameweek, the 7-3-1 Packers traveled to Detroit to face the 7-3 Lions for a divisional battle with huge implications for the playoffs. The winner of this Thanksgiving game would probably push the loser out of the playoffs or at least into the Wild Card. With the Packers having beaten the Lions earlier in the season, this game would determine whether Green Bay would have the season sweep; a Packers win would give them the lead in any potential tiebreaker within the division.

Immediately, the Packers started with a strong drive that resulted in a field goal. The teams would exchange punts before the Packers put up a touchdown behind Josh Jacobs' 29-yard run and a beautiful connection between quarterback Jordan Love and receiver Dontayvion Wicks. However, Detroit responded with a touchdown of its own, utilizing its two strong

backs in Jahmyr Gibbs and David Montgomery.

Before the half, the Packers and Lions traded touchdowns to put the Packers up 17-14. On their first drive in the third quarter, the Lions were forced to punt. Meanwhile, Love and Green Bay needed only two plays to put up a third passing touchdown with a 51-yard bomb to Christian Watson. Jared Goff scored in response, but the Packers continued to dominate as Jordan Love picked up his fourth passing touchdown of the game.

After that, the game slowed. The Lions turned the ball over on downs, and the Packers answered with a punt. Another six-minute drive only resulted in a field goal for the Lions to put them within one score at 24-31, but Detroit would never have the ball again.

With the win, the Packers have proven they are a formidable team; all they need is to find consistency. Offensively, Love was phenomenal with four touchdowns and 234 yards on just 18 completions in 30 attempts. Josh Jacobs and the run game were also quite successful. Defensively, Micah Parsons was a monster with two and a half sacks this game.

Despite last year's dominance, Detroit has struggled to find any strength. None of their wins have been against any true contenders. Offensively, the pieces are there with Amon-Ra St. Brown and a dangerous running back duo, but the loss of their offensive coordinator from last year has put the brakes on their production. Truly, if the Lions want to make the postseason, they must go on a run.

Rams @ Panthers: 28-31

Going into the game, the 9-2 Rams were favored to beat the 6-6 Panthers; however, the Panthers' defense truly stepped up. Immediately, Matthew Stafford connected with Davante Adams for a touchdown on the first drive. The Panther, however, responded with a 35-yard touchdown by Chuba Hubbard on a short pass from Bryce Young.

The Rams would march down the field again, but in the red zone, Stafford's pass was deflected for an interception in the end zone. This broke Stafford's ten-week zero-interception streak. The Panthers would go three and out, putting the ball back into the Rams' hands. In a standard dig route by Puka Nacua, Stafford's pass lagged behind the receiver right into the hands of a Panthers cornerback who returned the ball for a pick six to put the Panthers up 14-7.

The Rams' next drive was successful, as Stafford found Adams for another touchdown. Carolina answered with a field goal after a seven-minute drive. Right before the half, the Rams' Blake Corum scored a rushing touchdown after a 51-yard Stafford pass to lead 21-17.

To start the second half, Carolina had a deep 33-yard passing touchdown to cap off a six-minute drive. The teams then exchanged punts until the Rams scored their fourth touchdown with a seven-yard rush by Kyren Williams. However, the Panthers and Bryce Young would not rest as the quarterback threw a huge 43-yard touchdown pass to take back the lead at 31-28.

Los Angeles then had the ball with six minutes in the game to score or at least kick a field goal. Slowly marching down the field, Stafford was sacked at the Carolina 30-yard line, where his fumble was recovered by the Panthers. With only two minutes left in the game, Young only needed to convert one more first down to seal the game.

After this game, the Panthers tie the Buccaneers' win total as they threaten to take the lead in the NFC South. Bryce Young has begun to show more consistency and confidence with the team, a huge improvement for the former Heisman winner. More importantly, the Panthers' defense came up huge in this game. Despite giving up 28 points, they still forced three turnovers.

As for the Rams, they are still true Super Bowl contenders, and Stafford still has a great argument for MVP; however, their division is stacked with the Seahawks and 49ers also sitting at nine wins. This game was a weird anomaly for the LA defense, as this is the first time all season they have allowed more than 26 points. Depending on how their divisional opponents perform in upcoming weeks, this loss may make the Rams' postseason route much more difficult.

Looking Ahead:

Next week, the Patriots, Giants, 49ers, and Panthers all take their bye weeks as they get some much-needed rest. While they take a break, keep a lookout for the Bengals-Bills game (BUF -6) and Colts-Jaguars matchup (IND -1.5). With Joe Burrow back in play, the Bengals are a dangerous team after dominating the Ravens on Thursday. Meanwhile, the Bills have had a tumultuous season with multiple turnovers to counter Allen's many touchdowns.

For games to watch this week, the Colts will travel down to Jacksonville on Sunday for a divisional matchup. Both teams sit at 8-4, so this game will likely determine the AFC South winner. The Colts started this season strong, but have significantly slowed with back-to-back losses. As for the Jaguars, Trevor Lawrence continues to be volatile, matching great performances with poor ones.

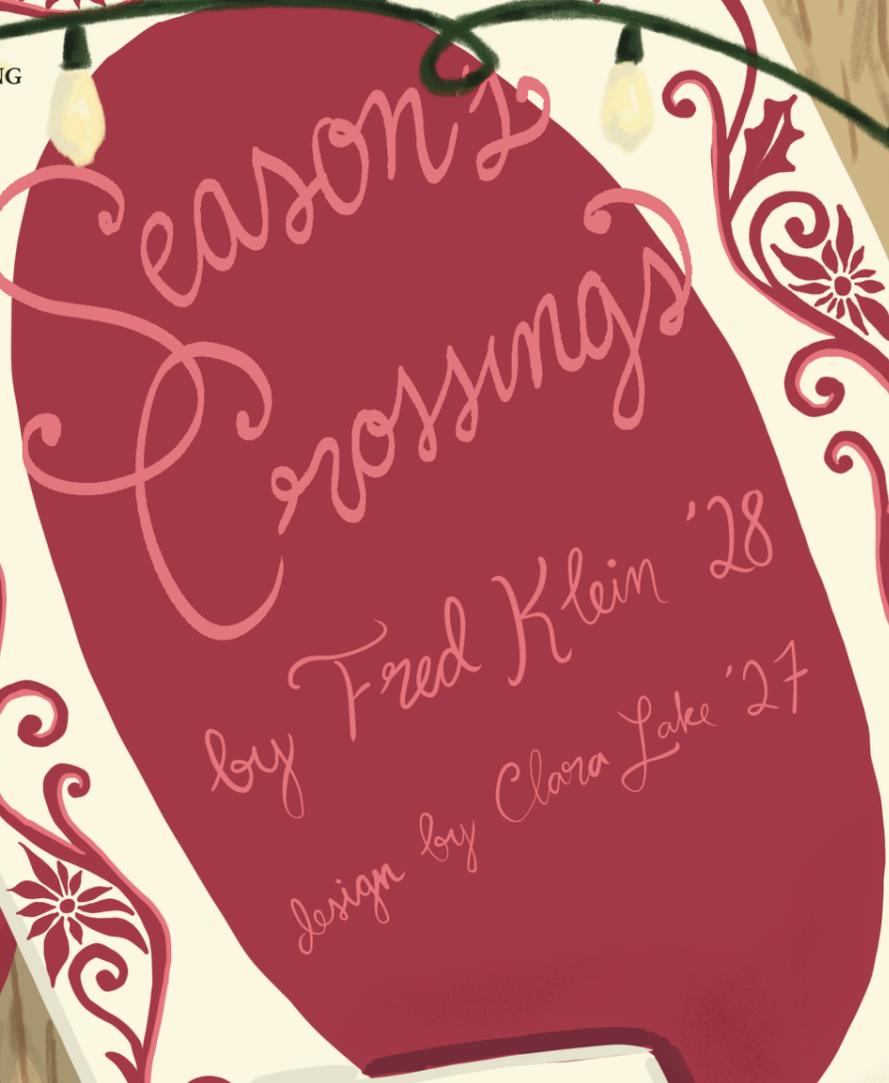
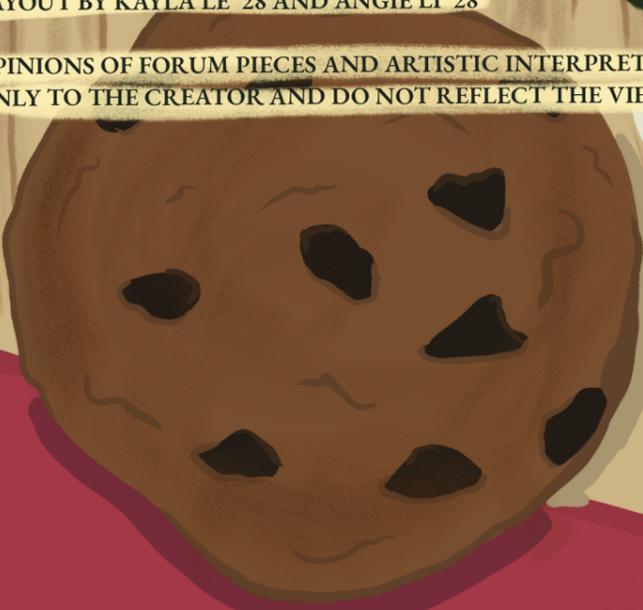
As for games that may be worth missing, the Saints visit the Buccaneers (TB -8.5), and the Rams face the Cardinals (LAR -8.5). The 2-10 Saints have struggled all season, including a midseason quarterback change, while the Buccaneers have mostly only stumbled against top-tier opponents. Similarly, the Rams have had a dominant season and should easily bypass the 3-9 Cardinals, especially since quarterback Jacobi Brissett will start instead of the injured Kyler Murray.

TYLER DANG '28 (TYLERDANG@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) JUST WANTS THE LOSING TO END.

GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26



OPINIONS OF FORUM PIECES AND ARTISTIC INTERPRETATIONS OF DESIGNERS BELONG ONLY TO THE CREATOR AND DO NOT REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE INDEPENDENT



by Fred Klein '28
design by Clara Lake '27

The Indy
12 Arrow St
Cambridge, MA
02138

Across

- 3. Hate, Hate, Hate,
----- Entirely.
- 5. They're kept under wraps.
- 6. Puff pastry cheese for the
Holidays.

Down

- 1. Shout of Encouragement.
- 2. Santa's vehicle.
- 4. ----- Roll.

